

## Better Meeting Practices:

# The Round

**The Round is a discipline that can greatly enhance the productivity of a meeting. It provides an opportunity for all voices to be heard. It reduces domination of discussions. It helps to develop consensus.**

## Uses for the Round

- **Opening Check in:** Very often members of a group have things on their mind which have nothing to do with the meeting they are in but have everything to do with their mental and emotional state. It will help the meeting if those present know joys and sorrows. This way members can take into account the otherwise Unexplained reactions of their colleagues. **Sometimes** it is helpful to do a second check-in round that is more focused on reports of still deeper emotional states of the members. This is when anger and frustration with some aspect of life or the project at hand can be vented. **In groups where some or all people are new** it will be very helpful if everyone present knows who everyone else is and what they represent. For example if a newspaper reporter is present, everyone should know that.
- **Open up discussion on a focused subject:** It will help to expedite the discussion if it starts from a place of knowing every participant's take on the matter. It will also help to keep the discussion focused on the matter at hand and avoid tangents.
- **Open up discussion in order to find focus when several items are requiring attention:** Often we come into meetings where the agenda is loaded and even within individual agenda items there may be many areas to cover. The round can serve to establish the priorities of the group thus avoiding overriding anxiety that occurs when less critical items dominate the discussion.
- **Discover consensus of the group regarding a question:** A round or two can efficiently process the nuances of opinion into a decision which demonstrates the mind of the group.
- **Provide a safe place** for individuals to speak who otherwise would be intimidated. Also effective when a topic is emotionally loaded.
- **Reestablish Focus**  
Very often groups lose their focus. A round will help to get back on track.
- **Build a discussion:** As people speak the next person seeks to add their own thoughts to the ideas that have been stated before so as to 'build' the discussion toward a conclusion.
- **Closing Check out:** It will improve the group's team spirit if at the end of each session each person relates what went well for them during the meeting and what did

not go well. It can also be helpful for each member to comment on how they individually did in the meeting and ask for feedback from other members.

## Rules of the Round

- **Each person speaks in turn, one at a time:** This understanding insures to each member present that they will have an opportunity to be heard.
- **Individuals are allowed to pass:** This reassures each member that speaking is at their prerogative.
- **Paradoxically it is important that all members speak:** Paradox is a fact of life and it helps if we acknowledge this fact. While permission to pass is honored, 'withholding' or 'holding out to see how the wind blows' are disruptive to productive discussion.
- **There is no cross talk:** As each member speaks other members do not respond with comments or questions.
- **There are no side conversations:** As each member speaks all other members remain silent and do not speak to their neighbors.
- **Avoid airtime:** Make your point or points and then stop talking. Long-winded rationalizations, stories of the past, and irrelevant side bars do not add to the group's ability to stay focused.
- **Speak your truth:** The discussion will be more productive if members state as clearly as possible exactly what is on their mind.
- **Listen to completion:** A very difficult part of communication is listening to and hearing the other person completely without indulging our own thought process. We often race forward to create our response while the other person is still speaking. It sometimes helps to wait briefly after we think the other person has stopped and then ask them if they are 'complete'. We often use a 'stop' when a breath is taken to immediately start our 'response' not realizing we have cut the other person off.
- **Do not attack other members** of the group verbally or otherwise. The Round is a 'safe place'.
- **Ask someone in the group, preferably not the leader, to summarize the outcome of the round:** It will increase team spirit if the meeting is not dominated by the chair. It will help the group to have a sense of how the discussion went.
- **Allow for some discussion to achieve consensus on the summary:** By seeking consensus on the summary the group will come closer faster to consensus on the issue or subject before them.